

ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

A method for searching, selecting, and playing audio program playlists. A station that is affiliated with a network of associated stations provides a top channel of programming which includes a default playlist. An alternate playlist is prepared as each item in the top channel is received by a listener. If the listener reacts to an item of the default playlist in a prescribed manner, the listener is automatically switched to a sidechannel where the alternate playlist is immediately started. The sidechannel is typically personalized based on a user preference that reflects how the top channel or the sidechannel has been modified. The sidechannel maintains the character of the station on whose top channel it is based. A further sidechannel may be created for a user of a station that reflects an alternate user preference at that respective station. Therefore according to one example a listener can switch between different channels of any station, a top channel of general programming, and one or more distinct sidechannels of personalized programming if the listener has modified a playlist of that station to cause a sidechannel to be created. Each affiliated station may offer these services to listeners. A standardized control device operates in a common manner among affiliated stations so that a listener may navigate among them in a familiar manner. The control device includes modify and search functions. A display of the control device shows the different aspects of navigation in consistent locations of the display screen. A side channel may include reduced commercial programming, where a user earns credits toward reduced commercials by paying a fee or performing certain actions such as responding to ads.